

NCA  
VOC FOR PGM/FN  
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-6289  
DOLPH HAERING/MUNICH

NOVEMBER 30, 1978

# AMERICAN BLUE JEANS FOR EAST GERMANY

ANNCR:

A PARTICULAR KIND OF PANTS IS ON SALE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SEVERAL DEPARTMENT STORES IN EAST GERMANY: AMERICAN-MADE BLUE JEANS, VOA'S DOLPH HAERING SENDS THIS REPORT FROM MUNICH.

VOICE:

GENUINE AMERICAN BLUE JEANS HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE IN EAST GERMANY FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, BUT ONLY FOR THAT LIMITED NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO WERE ABLE TO BUY THEM AT THE SO-CALLED "INTERSHOPS" FOR HARD CURRENCIES. THE MAJORITY OF EAST GERMANS COULD ONLY BUY THOSE BLUE JEANS MANUFACTURED IN EAST GERMANY. BUT THE CUSTOMERS HAVE BEEN COMPLAINING ABOUT THE POOR QUALITY OF THE HOME PRODUCTS AND THEY'VE BEEN ASKING FOR BLUE JEANS MADE IN THE UNITED STATES.

SO, TO COMPLY WITH WIDESPREAD DEMAND, PARTICULARLY BY YOUNG PEOPLE, THE EAST GERMAN GOVERNMENT HAS JUST IMPORTED ABOUT HALF-A-MILLION PAIRS OF BLUE JEANS FROM THE UNITED STATES. THE EXACT FIGURE HAS NOT BEEN DISCLOSED BY OFFICIALS, BUT THIS ESTIMATE IS DESCRIBED AS FAIRLY ACCURATE. IT IS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE BIGGEST DEALS BETWEEN EAST GERMANY AND THE UNITED STATES IN THIS ECONOMIC SECTOR.

THE BLUE JEANS WERE FLOWN TO EAST BERLIN AND THE CITY OF DRESDEN BY PRIVATE AMERICAN CARGO PLANES. AFTER THE FIRST SHIPMENT OF THE COVETED PANTS ARRIVED EARLIER THIS WEEK, QUEUES IN FRONT OF SALES COUNTERS IN SEVERAL EAST BERLIN STORES DEMONSTRATED THE GREAT INTEREST OF THE EAST GERMANS. BUYERS SEEMED NOT TO OBJECT TO THE HIGH PRICE: ABOUT ONE HUNDRED

FIFTY EAST GERMAN MARKS, OR THE EQUIVALENT OF EIGHTY DOLLARS FOR ONE PAIR. THE INTERSHOPS SELL THE SAME KIND OF BLUE JEANS FOR ONLY A THID OF THAT PRICE.

WORKERSNNOW CAN ORDER AMERICAN BLUE JEANS THROUGH THEIR FACTORY ADMINISTRATION, BUT ONLY TWO PAIRS, AND FOR THE FULL PRICE.

(OPT) MEANWHILE, A BOOK HAS COME OUT IN WEST GERMANY ABOUT THE MAN WHO ORIGINALLY DESIGNED THE BLUE JEANS FOR THE GOLD-DIGGERS IN CALIFORNIA: LEVI STRAUSS, WHO EMIGRATED AT THE AGE OF FIFTEEN FROM GERMANY TO THE UNITED STATES ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-FIVE YEARS AGO. THE BOOK LOOKS INTO THE WORLDWIDE POPULARITY THAT THE BLUE JEAN HAVE ATTAINED. ACCORDING TO THE BOOK, MARILYN MONROE LOVED TO WEAR BLUE JEANS, AND SO DO PRESIDENT CARTER AND WEST GERMAN CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT. AND WHAT'S POPULAR AT ALL LEVELS OF WESTERN SOCIETY, IS, NOT SURPRISINGLY, POPULAR IN SO-CALLED CLASSLESS COMMUNIST SOCIETIES, AS EAST GERMANY HAS NOW SHOWN.

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